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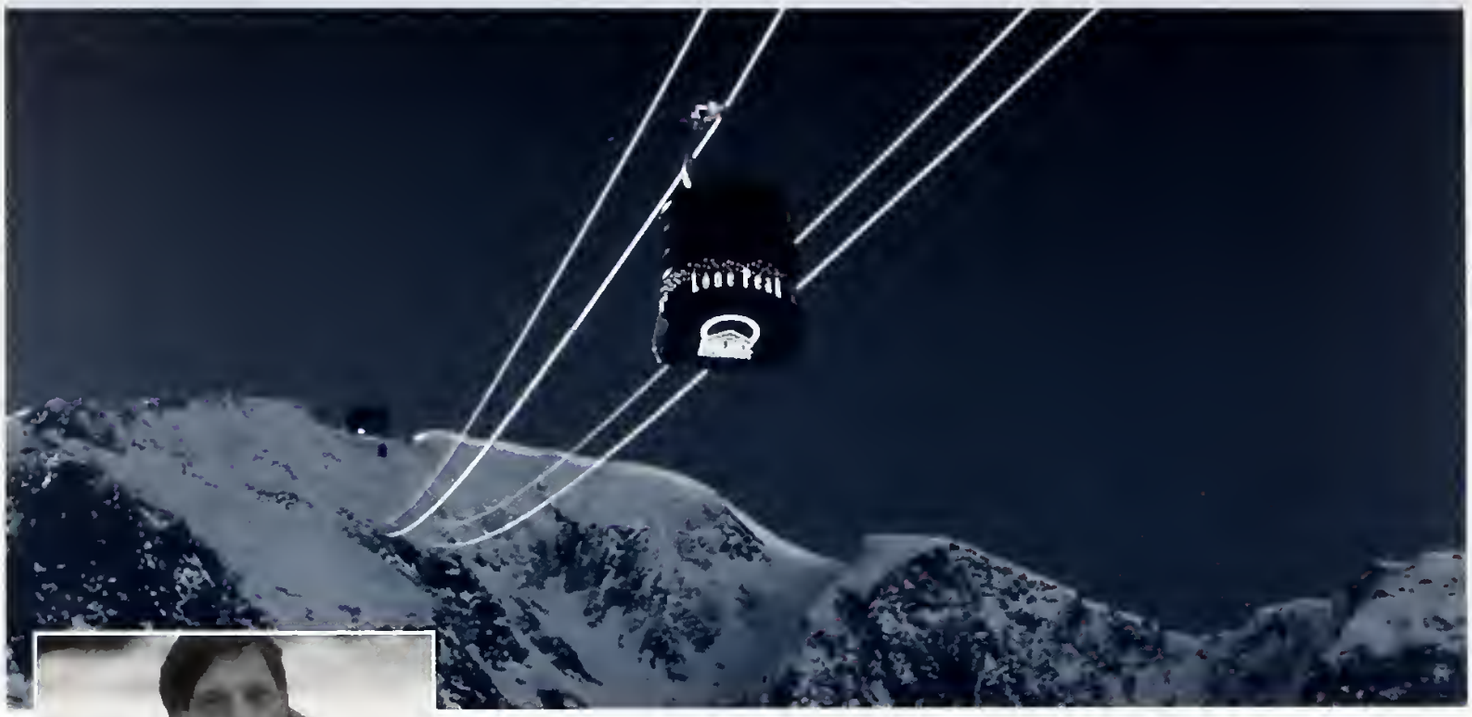
FEATURE

Montana's Winter Website

Untold Story Leads From Montana



COURTESY OF BIG SKY SKI & SUMMER RESORT

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Chet Huntley

WINTER 1998/99

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Not Getting Older, Getting Better: Big Sky Turns 25

"Just as important as working for the good life, is finding a place to enjoy." Those are the words of the late NBC newscaster Chet Huntley describing his vision of Big Sky Ski and Summer Resort. Huntley was instrumental in planning and building Big Sky. Now celebrating 25 years, Montana's largest destination ski resort has carved its niche in Montana as a wintertime wonderland for pure enjoyment.

Big Sky opened for skiing in December 1973, at a cost of $40 million. Over the years, Big Sky has invested millions more into mountain and lodging improvement projects. Today, 17 lifts transport skiers and snowboarders over 3,500 skiable acres. Lone Peak Tram, which hoists skiers to 11,166 feet, gives Big Sky one of the nation's largest vertical drops at 4,180 feet. And this year, snowboarders and skiers who dare to say, "bring it on" will be treated to the new state-of-the-art terrain park. The park features kickers, bumps, banks and a 400-foot half pipe. This translates to a "radical" snow experience.

Off the slopes, snowshoers can travel uphill on the resort's new "moose tracks" trail. Cross-country skiing, dog sledding and touring nearby Yellowstone Park are other added winter activities. If all of this is not enough for silver anniversary festivities, Big Sky has a host of special events planned.

UPCOMING EVENTS AT BIG SKY

November 26	Silver anniversary ski season opens
December 4	"Carving Cause" day - ($10 lift tickets/portion donated to Montana non-profit organization)
December 12-13	USSA slalom and giant slalom races
December 31	New Years Eve - torch hill parade and fireworks
February 20	Jimmie Heuga Snow Express - (benefits those with multiple sclerosis)
March 6 and 7	Second annual Thrash and Bash Cross games
April 11	Close of silver anniversary ski year

For more information call 800-548-4486 or visit Big Sky's website at www.bigskyresort.com.

It's All Downhill From Here: Welcome Blacktail Mountain

Montana's newest ski area, Blacktail Mountain, will open its slopes to skiers this fall. Towering above Flathead Lake, Blacktail is located 27 miles south of Kalispell. According to Dan Bovee, Blacktail's Marketing and Ski School Director, the area offers a no-frills approach to skiing. "Blacktail will focus its efforts on locals," says Bovee. "We will keep lift prices down, so mom, dad and the kids can afford to get back on the slopes." Lift tickets run $25 for adults and $15 for students (8-18); kids seven and under, and those "kids at heart," 70 and over, will ski for free.

While the mountain is low on "frills," Bovee adds, it offers skiers countless "thrills." Visitors will be treated to breathtaking vistas and 24 groomed runs, covering 200 acres. Bovee says the base of the ski hill is unique because "skiers will drive to the top of the mountain and ski down;" the base at most ski hills is at the bottom.

So is there room for another Montana ski area? Blacktail planners say yes. Blacktail Mountain does not intend to compete with nearby Big Mountain, a resort that caters to the out-of-area skiers, but rather be an alternative for local ski enthusiasts. It gives folks an affordable option to pick up the sport of downhill skiing in Montana.

For more information on Blacktail Mountain call (406) 844-0999 or visit their website at www.blacktailmountain.com ❄

A Hot Time On The Ice

BETTY STONE

Can you top this one? 1998 Fort Peck Ice fishing tournament.

Fishing enthusiasts on northeastern Montana's Fort Peck Lake will walk on water this February—ice water that is. Saturday, February 13 marks the 3rd annual Fort Peck ice fishing tournament. A $1,000 purse will be awarded to the fisherman or woman who catches the largest fish of any species. Sue Smith, tourney organizer and owner of the Mondak Marine says at times "catching a fish can be slim." In fact she says at the first tournament "the winning fish only weighed one pound."

Even with those odds, ice afishionados travel from a 150-mile radius to try their luck at Fort Peck. Contestants pay $50 for each pre-drilled hole. Sue explains the tournament is for novice and seasoned fisher folks alike. It's a great social event that takes away the mid-winter blues. "Ice fishing is a family thing, where you spend time with your kids or hang out with your buddies," Sue says.

BETTY STONE

Contestants at Fort Peck ice fishing tourney.

What does it take to ice fish? Perhaps the biggest attraction to ice fishing is its simplicity. Anyone can do it. Dress warm. Cut a hole in the ice, put a line and a hook on a rod, add bait (this ranges from worms to corn to marshmallows) and plop it in the water. Now you can ice fish. Sue Smith says another added benefit to catching fish in the winter is "they're better eatin', the cold water makes them taste fresher."

So if you're looking for some hot wintertime fun head to Fort Peck or stop by any frozen lake in Montana, where you'll be sure to spot someone "walking on water."

For more information on the ice fishing tourney contact the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce (406) 228-2222. ❄

Montana's Winter Fun, Just a Click Away

Explore Montana's winter wonderland on Travel Montana's new and improved websites. In an effort to make winter information easier to find and more specific, Travel Montana's internet staff has been working hard keeping the tourism websites current, interesting and accessible.

By logging onto www.wintermt.com or www.skimt.com, you'll discover a blizzard of Montana winter information: downhill skiing, cross-country skiing, snowboarding and snowmobiling activities, lodging spots, a winter events calendar, cold weather safety tips and the latest in travel and road conditions.

The winter recreation website features daily snow condition updates from each ski area. Cross-country ski properties with groomed trails are listed as are outfitters who offer guided cross-country ski trips. Downhill thrill seekers will find discount travel packages offered by nine of Montana's ski areas: Bear Paw, Big Mountain, Big Sky, Bridger Bowl, Discovery Basin, Lost Trail/Powder Mountain, Red Lodge, Montana Snowbowl and Showdown.

If snowmobiling revs your engine, check out www.sledtherockies.org. Travel Montana and the states of Idaho and Wyoming have formed a new website partnership to promote snowmobiling in the Rocky Mountains as a fun winter adventure. The site gives specific snowmobiling opportunities in the three states and also includes a link back to each of the state's individual sites.

VICTOR BJORNBERG

Winter activities not enough? Travel Montana offers a range of sites to suit every traveler. ❄

Year round:
visitmt.com
Winter information:
wintermt.com or skimt.com
Features:
lewisandclark.state.mt.us
kids.state.mt.us
Alberta/MT promotion:
2nations.state.mt.us
MT/WY promotion:
3parks.state.mt.us

Ride Like The Wind

Ice Boating

A brisk breeze blows over the frozen waters of Canyon Ferry Reservoir, outside of Helena. A thin layer of snow rests on the smooth ice. The sun sparkles above. For many, this tranquil winter scene is best viewed from indoors, but for some 30 regular ice boaters, there's no better time to raise their sails and take a ride. "It's contagious," says 77 year old Carl Harper, Canyon Ferry's official ice boat guru. "A lot of the folks out here aren't sailors, they're a mixed group who are thrill seekers."

DONNIE SEXTON

Carl Harper crafts an ice boat at his home.

Thrills and ice come natural to Harper. As a child growing up on Madison, Wisconsin's Lake Medota, he and his brother regularly sailed on water and ice. "We would put sails on a sled, we put them on anything." Harper began to build his own boats as a youngster. He eventually made his way to Montana to ranch and rodeo, where he continued to craft boats and sail.

Harper explains that while Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin are popular ice yachting states, Montana has some great ice boating conditions and "Canyon Ferry is as good as any." The area's winds are generally just right for the activity, strong enough to blow the snow off the ice, but not so strong as to send an ice boat toppling.

COURTESY TOWNSEND STAR

Ice boats sail across Canyon Ferry.

The average speed of an ice yacht is 40 miles per hour, but some boats have gone as fast as 100 miles per hour. The danger in ice boating, adds Harper, is not the speed as much as a sailor not paying attention to ice conditions. It is best to ice boat with others. "After you live near a body of water you get to know it," Harper says. "Ice boating is a lot easier than regular sailing, you just need wind." Anyone can pick the sport up in 20 minutes.

Is there special ice boating attire? Not really, Harper says, he slips on a pair of goggles, his wool cap and some warm coveralls and boots. He explains he doesn't wear a helmet, but many of them out there do, he adds with a chuckle, "to encase the few brains they have." ❄

Skate-Sailing

If you take a closer look on Canyon Ferry, you'll notice mixed in with the ice boats are a few folks cruising the ice upright with a sail. One of those skate-sailors is Helena resident, Steve Bender. Each winter weekend, Bender and a few of his buddies lace up their skates, strap on their sails and fly. "It's just flat fun," Bender says.

Bender was an avid downhill skier, but that got too expensive, so he switched to skate-sailing. "I needed to replace downhill skiing with a different sensation of speed," Bender says, "It's just like skiing, without the hill." Bender averages 40 miles per hour, but there are times when he isn't exactly reasonable and prudent. "I have hit 60 miles per hour and that's getting a little too fast."

Unlike windsurfers who face their sails, skate-sailors have their backs to the sail.

COURTESY TOWNSEND STAR

Skate-sailor rides like the wind.

Bender explains that the key to skate-sailing is having good balance. A secure hockey skate or downhill boot rigged with a blade lends great ankle support. Bender adds that knowing how to skate, having edge control and reading winds are other important skills for skate-sailing.

Sweden is a hotbed for skate-sailing; however, in the United States, it hasn't really taken off. But that does not bother Bender; he says as long as the ice is smooth and the winds are blowing at Canyon Ferry Reservoir, he'll continue to cruise. ❄

Note: Montana's area code is 406.

NOVEMBER

14	BIG TIMBER CHRISTMAS BAZAAR AND CRAFT SHOW - Big Timber 932-4035
14	COUNTRY CHRISTMAS - Lewistown 428-2316
14	SPECIALTY FAIR - Malta 654-1436
20	DOWNTOWN HELENA FALL ART WALK - Helena 447-1535
21	BIGFORK ELVES DECORATE FOR CHRISTMAS - Bigfork 837-5888
21	CUT BANK WINTER FESTIVAL - Cut Bank 873-4041
21 - 22	CAN/AM SPEEDSKATING TOURNAMENT - Butte 723-5454
21 - 22	HOLIDAY ANTIQUE SHOW - Great Falls 727-5150
23 - 1/10/99	STORYLAND CHRISTMAS AT THE MOSS MANSION - Billings 256-5100
27	CHRISTMAS STROLL - Anaconda 563-2400
27	THIRD ANNUAL NORTH POLE STROLL - Ennis 682-4388
27	CHRISTMAS WALK AND PARADE OF LIGHTS - Forsyth 356-2134
27	HOLIDAY LIGHT PARADE - Glendive 365-5601
27	HOLIDAY CRAFT FAIR - Helena 443-2242
27	CHRISTMAS CITY OF THE NORTH PARADE - Kalispell 758-2800
27	CHRISTMAS STROLL AND PARADE OF LIGHTS - Sidney 482-1916
27 - 28	HOLIDAY FESTIVAL OF ARTS AND CRAFTS - Bozeman 587-2034
27 - 29	RENAISSANCE FAIR - Missoula 538-2212
27 - 12/29	ARTISTS AND CRAFTSMAN CHRISTMAS SHOW - Kalispell 881-4288
28	HOLIDAY PARADE - Billings 259-5260
28	CHRISTMAS STROLL - Havre 265-4383
28	LIVINGSTON COUNTRY CHRISTMAS - Livingston 222-2000
29	HOLIDAY FAIR - Anaconda 563-2422
29	THE NUTCRACKER - Billings 252-3610
29	BADGER GONZO RACE SERIES - Whitefish 862-2911

DECEMBER

2 - 5	FESTIVAL OF TREES - Butte 782-0353
3	FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS - Belgrade 388-1616
3 - 6	FESTIVAL OF TREES - Billings 252-9799
3 - 7	FESTIVAL OF TREES - Helena 442-7920
4	CHRISTMAS STROLL - Billings 259-5260
4	NIGHT OF LIGHTS - Columbia Falls 892-7529
4	CONRAD CHRISTMAS STROLL - Conrad 278-7791
4	CHRISTMAS STROLL - Great Falls 453-6151
4	CHRISTMAS STROLL - Harlowton 632-4694
4	CHRISTMAS STROLL - Miles City 232-2890
4	YULE NIGHT ON BROADWAY - Philipsburg 859-3236
4	ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARADE - Wolf Point 653-2012
4 - 5	CHRISTMAS STROLL - Butte 723-3177
4 - 5	POWELL COUNTY CHRISTMAS STROLL & FESTIVAL - Deer Lodge 846-2425
4 - 5	CHRISTMAS STROLL - Lewistown 538-5436
4 - 5	CHRISTMAS COMES TO LIFE AND FESTIVAL OF TREES - Libby 293-4167
4 - 5	CHRISTMAS STROLL - Red Lodge 446-1718 or 446-1720
4 - 6	CATCH THE MAGIC - Hamilton 363-4218
4 - 6	WINTER GUN SHOW - Hamilton 777-5861
5	BIG TIMBER COWBOY BALL - Big Timber 932-6668
5	HOLIDAY STROLL, ARTWALK & TREE LIGHTING CEREMONY - Bigfork 837-5888
5	CHRISTMAS STROLL - Bozeman 586-4008
5	7th ANNUAL OLD FASHIONED CHRISTMAS FAIR - Livingston 222-4185
5	CHRISTMAS STROLL - Stanford 566-2633
5	TOWNSEND CHRISTMAS STROLL - Townsend 266-3325
5 - 6	KICK-OUT-THE-KINKS BENEFIT SKI RACE - Essex 888-5700
5 - 6	SILVER BELLS - Fairview 747-5259
6	VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS AT GRANT-KOHRS RANCH - Deer Lodge 846-2070
6	ORIGINAL GOVERNOR'S MANSION CHRISTMAS TOUR - Helena 444-4710
6	CHRISTMAS TO REMEMBER - Laurel 628-8105
6	MONDAK ETHNIC CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION - Sidney 482-3500
7	CHRISTMAS STROLL PARADE OF LIGHTS - Malta 654-1776
11	WHITEFISH CHRISTMAS STROLL - Whitefish 862-3501
11 - 13	GUN AND HUNTING TROPHY SHOW - Bozeman 582-3270 or 586-6179
12	CHARLIE RUSSELL CHEW-CHOO CHRISTMAS TRAIN - Lewistown 538-5436
12	THREE FORKS CHRISTMAS STROLL - Three Forks 285-3414
12	AMERICAN LEGION/VFW TURKEY DINNER AND SLEIGH RIDE - Twin Bridges 684-5259
18 - 19	4th ANNUAL CHASE HAWKS MEMORIAL COWBOY GATHERIN' DINNER, DANCE AND ROUGH STOCK INVITATIONAL RODEO – Billings 248-9295
19 - 20	HOLIDAY CANDLELIGHT TOURS - Three Forks 287-3541 or 287-3032
20	CHRISTMAS TEA - Hamilton 363-3338
22 - 23	SNOWBOARD CAMP - Whitefish 862-1900
24	CHRISTMAS EVE TORCHLIGHT PARADE & FESTIVITIES - Big Sky 995-5000
24	CHRISTMAS EVE TORCHLIGHT PARADE WITH SANTA - Whitefish 862-2900
31	NEW YEARS EVE FIREWORKS DISPLAY AND CELEBRATION - Big Sky 995-5000
31	TORCHLIGHT PARADE & FIREWORKS DISPLAY - Marysville 449-3746
31	FIRST NIGHT MISSOULA - Missoula 549-4755

JANUARY

2 - 3	ROOT BEER CLASSIC - Polebridge 752-2929
8 - 9	AG DAYS AND TRADE SHOW - Sidney 482-1206
9	PANCAKE BREAKFAST - Lincoln 362-4335 or 362-4078
9 - 12	TELEMARK WORLD CUP - Whitefish 862-2911
10 - 12	WOMEN'S AND MEN'S WORKSHOPS - Whitefish 862-2900
15 - 17	BILLINGS HOME AND GARDEN SHOW/HEALTH & FITNESS EXPO - Billings 245-0404
15 -17	MONTANA PRO RODEO CIRCUIT FINALS - Great Falls 727-8115
23	SNOWMOBILE POKER RUN - Lincoln 362-4335
23 - 24	U.S. JUNIOR NATIONAL LONG TRACK CHAMPIONSHIPS - Butte 723-5454
23 - 24	SEELEY LAKE AREA WINTERFEST - Seeley Lake 677-2880
23 - 28	MONTANA WINTER FAIR - Bozeman 582-3270
29	WINTER MICROBREW FESTIVAL - Whitefish 862-2900
30	WESTERN MONTANA WINE FESTIVAL - Missoula 728-3100
30 - 31	THE SEELEY LAKE 100 - Seeley Lake 677-3016
30 - 2/7	FROST FEVER/WINTERFEST - Missoula 523-2754

FEBRUARY

5	COWTOWN BEEF BREEDERS SHOW, CRAFT EXPO & AG TRADE SHOW - Miles City 232-2890
5 - 7	NORTHERN RODEO ASSOCIATION FINALS - Billings 252-1122
5 - 7	WHITEFISH WINTER CARNIVAL - Whitefish 862-3501
6	BUD/CHILI COOK-OFF - Great Falls 761-1900
6	THOUSAND DOLLAR SUPER POKER RIDE - Haugan 678-4242
6	CABIN FEVER DAYS - Lincoln 362-4078
6 - 7	MONTANA POWDER 8'S CHAMPIONSHIP - Bozeman 586-1518
6 - 7	ANNUAL WINTER FEST - Lakeside 844-2133 or 844-3981
6 - 7	SNOWBOARD JAM - Missoula 549-9777
6 - 7	MASTERS NORTHERN DIVISION CHAMPIONSHIPS - Whitefish 862-2911
6 - 3/28	WINTERNATIONAL XII SPORTS FESTIVAL - Butte 723-3177
12 - 14	GUN SHOW - Livingston 932-5380
12 - 18	RACE TO THE SKY - Helena 442-4008
13	ICE FISHING TOURNAMENT - Glasgow 228-2222
17 - 21	KANDAHAR CUP - Whitefish 862-2911 or 862-2912
20 - 21	WILD WEST SHRED O'FEST SNOWBOARD COMPETITION - Bozeman 586-1518
21 - 22	NORTHERN DIVISION FREESTYLE CHAMPIONSHIP - Missoula 549-9777
25 - 27	GLENDIVE AGRI-TRADE EXPOSITION - Glendive 365-6781
26 - 27	HELENA'S IRISH FESTIVAL - Helena 442-3263
26 - 28	NORTHERN ROCKY MOUNTAIN WINTER GAMES - Red Lodge 446-1718 or 446-1720
27	WINE AND FOOD FESTIVAL - Great Falls 761-1900
27	MOONLIGHT SNOWMOBILE POKER RUN - Lincoln 362-4335 or 362-4078
27	SNOWBOARD JAM - Neihart 236-5522
27 - 28	SNOWBOWL CUP GELANDE CHAMPIONSHIP - Missoula 549-9777

FROM MONTANA

The diversity of events, places and people in Montana is almost as wide as the state itself. We hope to give you a taste of that diversity with this quarterly newsletter. In addition, my office offers these services to editors, writers and producers.

Visual Materials
Color slides, 8 x 10" B/W photos, and stock video footage are available for editorial use.

Writer/Photographer Referrals
We can put you in contact with many of Montana's most talented and experienced freelance writers and photographers.

Editorial Copy/Calendar of Events
We'll provide background information or editorial copy for many subjects. We also maintain a calendar of events for the entire state.

Individual Attention
If you need the latest vacation guide and road map of Montana, a liaison with other government agencies, or detailed information to fit a specific story angle, we're here to assist you.

Mary

Mary Boyle
Publicity Coordinator

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